

ties, who were as deeply interested as themselves in the determination of this question, would not, while they obtained every thing for themselves, which under every circumstance and under every possibility they could do, reduce them to the necessity of placing their constituency in a position which they ought not to occupy. This would be to adjourn the Convention, and leave its work half done. Rather ought they, if they designed a compromise, to bring forward a proposition which can commend itself to the common judgment not as a part of a whole system, but as a proposition wholly equitable in itself. If, when we leave this place, after having attained all that can be procured, the agitation is renewed upon the stronger basis which we may acquire—as that agitation will be renewed—as I and all would renew it—let those take the responsibility who have forced the scheme upon us, or have compelled us to accept it.

Mr. CHAMBERS observed there was more than one party whose interests were affected by this question. The four gentlemen who had addressed the Convention had regarded the subject in its practical operation on a particular portion of the State, and one pervading error was observable in the whole current of their arguments, in fact, formed the whole basis upon which their arguments were constructed. That error was in the assumption of the precise fact about which we totally disagree.

They assumed that opposition to their views, was doing injustice to that portion of the State, the peculiar interests of which they desire to advance.

Now, he utterly defined for himself, and so far as he was informed, for any gentleman within these walls, any purpose to do, or cause to be done, an act of injustice to the portion of the State alluded to, not upon this question alone, but in regard to any matter, touching which, we shall be called to act. What was the precise point of the controversy? Was it not simply whether by giving one portion of the State, (circumstanced as the State is,) a representation upon the one plan or the other, we should give an undue influence in the conduct or control of the political destinies of our people?

The question at issue is a practical one. We were not here as metaphysicians settling abstruse theories, political generalities and abstractions. No such thing. We are sent here by a practical constituency, to form a scheme of future government under which they are to live, under which they are to enjoy in the greatest security their rights of person and property. Government is alone necessary to gratify the wants of a community.

Its legitimate object is to supply those wants. These are of a practical character, and the Government must supply those means, which in actual operation, will meet these necessities of our people, guard in the best and safest mode possible, their civil, political, and religious liberties, and thus fulfil its purpose. The age for abstract theory and speculation, in matters of Government has gone by, at least as to us. In fact, there

was scarcely one of these political abstract propositions which could be affirmed as universally true. Every one of them required modification, and whenever the general principle had been applied, it had in every instance been modified. Above all, this was the last place in which these generalities and abstractions should be countenanced, discussed or thought of.

We were here to form a Constitution under which we were to live, under which our children and children's children were to live, and under and by which they were to have protection for their lives, their property and all that was dear to us and to them. Were we to talk about principles in the abstract, without reference to the actual, practical operation of these principles, on the great concerns of human life and in the various departments of commerce and business amongst men? Our business is not to settle and define what are and what are not the "rights of man," "the universal rights of man," in his primitive condition, or the "rights of the people," "the immortal people, who are eternal." If all this were done, it would leave our proper work entirely unaccomplished. The duty would still remain, practically to dispose of, and modify these admitted rights so as to promote the greatest happiness to the greatest number of those for whom we propose to form a scheme of government. All such rights as may be exercised consistently with this leading duty should be left free; all which conflict with it must be restrained or modified. We are bound to keep this in view as our polar star, "the greatest good to the greatest number." What our citizens have a fair claim to expect, is not a disquisition on the broad proposition that the political rights of one man are precisely equal to the political rights of another. What they did want, in reference to the question before us, was such a just and equitable distribution, to the different portions and different interests of the State, of the political power of the whole, and every part of it, as would work out the best practical results—"the greatest good to the greatest number." On this subject it was to be expected that opinions would differ, and it was doubtless a perfectly honest difference. It was, therefore, a very proper subject for discussion, that all might have the advantage of the various views which could be presented. Some of us venture to think that a mistaken theory has led to an erroneous conclusion. The theory of adopting an abstract principle, as alike applicable to every individual in a community, irrespective of all the varieties of location, pursuit, density or sparseness of population, or any other of the many different conditions which surrounded them, is we think unsafe. As is the case with all general truths, circumstances and change of condition must modify the rule. It will of necessity work mischief in any department of life, relentlessly to practice upon any general rule.

We think that in a case where experience has been had, we should take lessons from its teachings, so to the character and extent of such modifications. On this subject we had a large share of experience. Under the colonial government, we had got along well under a different system.